

Stay Far Away

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Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 00] Good morning. It's good to be with you all together as one community and we have a lot to cover this morning so I'm just going to jump right in.

We are continuing our series in the book of Proverbs. You'll remember that Proverbs is a book about wisdom and wisdom is skill in the art of living.

Wisdom begins its foundation is the fear of the Lord and it continues. It grows with humility. We can't expect to grow in wisdom, to have wisdom, unless we're willing to admit we don't know everything.

And so this morning we're going to be in Proverbs chapter 6 starting at verse 20. I invite you to turn there now and as we come to this portion, section of Proverbs, we're going to again be talking about the topic of sex.

And so I'm going to repeat virtually the same things I said at the beginning of my sermon last time when we talked about Proverbs chapter 5 at the beginning of July. First of all, when we come to topics that are hard and sensitive, it's important to note that we're going to say something, but not everything.

[1 : 07] There's too much to be said in one sermon and so we trust that as we come to God's word over and over again, we'll receive the full orb'd view of what he has to say about a variety of topics.

Second, we're going to come again across this issue of the woman playing the role of the temptress. That's what we're going to see in chapter 7 and so it's important again to ask the question, why is it the woman and not the man?

And I believe it's because it's a genre issue. So this is a book that's written to a young man and so it makes sense that he's being warned about a young woman. And if instead this were a book written by a mother to her daughter, we would expect the mother to warn her daughter about the man who is a tempter or a seducer.

So it's important to say that because we need to speak clearly in this issue because often women's sexuality is spoken of in the church that in a way that's harmful, sometimes very toxic. And so we just want to say up front, both men and women tempt people sexually. Both men and women are tempted. Both men and women desire and enjoy sex. Both men and women struggle with sexual integrity.

So we don't paint these things as a man's issue or a woman's issue. This is a human issue because God's made all of us as sexual beings. It's also important to note as we come to topics like this, it can be something that bring up memories for some of us, either of sinning or being sinned against.

[2 : 36] And so it's important to remember as those things happen that God's with us and that his forgiveness is real. But those things don't prevent us from looking at the entire counsel of his word, everything that God has to say to us.

God speaks about these things, and so we are unashamed to speak about them as well. Now, last time when we talked about this, we were in Proverbs chapter 5, and there's some overlap between Proverbs chapter 5 and Proverbs chapter 7.

But the main emphasis of Proverbs chapter 5 was this, flee sexual sin and do it by running towards your spouse, right? Have a lot of sex with your spouse.

That is one strategy the Proverbs present to us against sexual temptation. We're going to see a different strategy this morning from chapters 6 and 7.

It's not run towards your spouse, but run away from sin. Not run towards your spouse, not have a lot of really good sex with your spouse, but run away from sexual sin.

[3 : 43] Now, there's going to be a lot in this passage, right? We're covering all of chapter 7, part of chapter 6. There's going to be portions of it that reteach what was taught in chapter 5. And so we're not going to cover everything equally this morning.

We're going to have a focus, and that focus will be from chapter 7, verse 25. Let not your heart turn aside to her ways. Do not stray into her paths.

So we won't treat everything equally this morning, but we'll have a special focus on that because that's the primary focus of this passage. With that, I invite you again to turn either in your worship guide or in your Bible or in your phone to this portion of God's Word.

We are in Proverbs chapter 6, starting at verse 20. And as we turn to this, remember that this is God's Word. And God tells us in Proverbs chapter 30, verse 5, that every word of God proves true.

He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. And so that's why we start now reading at verse 20. Verse 27.

[5 : 34] Chapter 7.

Verse 6.

Verse 10.

Verse 27.

Verse 21.

[8 : 31] Verse 21. Verse 21. Verse 21.

Verse 21. Verse 21. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word.

And ■■■■ luigi comment we ask of trueordo affine the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

and you would challenge us. We ask all these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. You may remember when we were back in Proverbs chapter 5, there was one small comment that the father made to the son as he was telling him to pursue his wife, and it came in verse 8, and it was this, keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house.

So there's this woman out there right from chapter 5 that's trying to tempt you. Stay as far away as you can. Now that was a side comment in chapter 5.

[10 : 32] It is now the main focus of chapters 6 and 7. The father is not satisfied that he's just given that warning. He's now going to tell a long story so his son can understand why that is so necessary, why it's imperative that he stays away.

And that's the story that we're told in chapter 7. Starting at verse 6, this father's looking out on the streets, and he sees this simple person, this young man, who has not heeded the father's command to stay far away.

It seems it should be implied right by the fact that he's told to stay away that people know where this house is. They know the places of temptation. They know where this woman is lying in wait.

And yet this person is foolish. I don't know if they're doing this intentionally or unintentionally, but either way, this foolish person is not being careful about the way he's walking.

And so he is very close. He puts himself, just by his very position, in danger. And then we get to see that there's a process here. There's a pattern to sin, so it doesn't happen all at once.

- [11 : 39] It starts with him being in the wrong place, and then it continues by this woman coming out to seduce him. First of all, he's there at the wrong time, right? Verse 9, he's there in the evening.

We might wonder why he's wandering around at night. And then in verse 10, this woman comes out, and she has a variety of strategies. Verse 13, she kisses him.

Verse 14, she helps him understand that what's going on here because of her religious activities is at a time where she has a wonderful meal that she's prepared for him.

That's part of what we're supposed to take away from the fact that she's performed her sacrifices. In addition to that, she has created a space that's welcoming and inviting.

Verse 16, her couch has coverings on it. She's perfumed her bed. Verse 17, and not only is there this wonderful experience that she's offering out to this man, she's appealing to a variety of senses.

- [12 : 39] She's also appealing to his desire for secrecy. Look, you can enjoy this, and no one will find out. No one will know.

Verse 19, my husband is not at home. He has gone on a long journey. He won't be back for a long time. And so she uses her dress to attract him.

She's physically attractive. And of course, she uses her words to attract him. It's interesting that the Proverbs put such a highlight on the words of this woman, both in five and in seven.

She is saying things that this man wants to hear. It's not just a physical relationship. There are needs, perhaps, that he feels and has that are unmet, and she is willing to meet them.

And so we see several principles here that we have seen before, that when it comes to the foolish person and the simple person. First, the simple person, as I've told you over and over again, does not understand the relationship between present actions and future consequences.

- [13 : 44] The simple person cannot connect the dots on those things. And so that's part of what makes him simple. He can't connect the dots that being at the wrong place at the wrong time is going to make him vulnerable to this sin.

He doesn't have any strategy. Now, maybe he didn't have any bad intentions in this. Maybe he's just failing to guard himself. Maybe he knows where he's going. Either way, that's part of what makes him simple.

He has no strategy in life. He can't connect how all his actions come together. Remember, this is what we saw in chapter one, verse 22. Wisdom cries out and says to the simple person, how long, oh simple one, will you love your simple ways?

There's something that the simple person gets out of their simpleness. They don't have to do the hard work of being careful. But then there's another principle here that comes to us again from chapter one, and that's about the fear of the Lord.

It's not just that this simple person doesn't understand the danger that he's putting himself in. It's that this simple person doesn't have the fear of the Lord. You'll remember at the beginning of chapter one, our very first sermon on Proverbs, I gave you a list of the kinds of things that characterize someone who has the fear of the Lord.

- [14 : 57] One of them is, this person's goal is to stay far away from sin. The goal of the person who fears the Lord is to stay far away from sin.

That's something they're working for. And so someone who fears the Lord does not play the game where they try to get as close to sin as they can without crossing the line. Because remember, the person who fears the Lord loves wisdom.

And so they love what's right. They want to stay as close to it as possible because of their love for God and their knowledge of God's discipline.

That's part of what it means to fear the Lord. And so this man, this foolish young man, this simple man, he's simple, so he can't connect the dots. He's simple, so he doesn't fear the Lord.

He's not trying and working to stay away from sin. If we are trying to get as close as possible to sin without getting burned, we don't actually love wisdom.

[16:02] We're only perhaps afraid of the consequences of sin. We don't hate sin for its own sake. We don't love sin for its own sake. Wisdom is at most an inconvenience, right?

Maybe the simple person's afraid of consequences, but the simple person doesn't love wisdom enough to pursue it and hold firmly to it. You might think about it like this way.

The foolish person is the kind of person who knows there's something, right, they shouldn't buy. Maybe it's something that's wrong for them to purchase. Maybe it's something that's not wrong. They just can't afford it.

They know it's outside of their budget. It would be foolish to do it. And this is the person who goes to the store where that thing is sold and they press their nose up against the glass. They don't stay far away.

They hover around sin. They know they're not supposed to do it, yet they dance around it. They're looking at it. They're thinking about it. That's what the simple person is doing here.

[17:00] As the wise person, right, would stay away. They would not be in parts of town where that store is. They wouldn't walk by and look in. If they had to walk by it, they'd stay far away because they know that's a temptation for them.

And that's what the wise person does. So we've got the principle of the simple person, the principle of the fear of the Lord. And then we also see again the principle that we saw in 1 Peter, which is that our sexuality, sexual sin has this gravitational pull to it.

Remember I told you that story about the man who was a terrorist who went to bomb an adult theater and he was so drawn in by the images on the screen that he forgot there was a bomb underneath him.

He blew his legs off. Why? Because there's this gravitational pull to sexual sin. It has a special power and a temptation to it. And so this young man underestimates, right, the power that this is going to have over him.

He has both put himself in the wrong place and he's put himself in a specially vulnerable place. And so those are a few of the things that this highlights for us.

[18:05] The principle of being simple, the principle of fearing the Lord, and the principle of the serious attraction of sexual sin. There's a few minor notes here that I'll highlight as well that we covered in chapter five, so I won't go over them in detail.

But this chapter again outlines for us the serious consequences of sexual sin. It talks again about the fact that it can lead to death. Remember we covered that in chapter five.

It also highlights another principle for us under the consequences. If you look at chapter six, verse 26, we are told that adultery is an especially damaging form of sexual sin.

So Solomon's not saying here adultery is wrong, but other kinds of sexual sin are okay. He's saying adultery is especially damaging.

We might have put it this way. It is wrong to look at pornography. It is damaging. It is even more damaging to have a sexual relationship with someone who's married.

[19 : 12] And so that's again part of what's being put out here. There are repercussions that can carry across generations. It's not like cheating on your taxes.

You can repent, right? And you just go back and refile. Sexual sin's not like that. You can't go back and undo it. There are things that you cannot walk back.

That's part of what we see in verse 33 of chapter six. He will get wounds and dishonor and his disgrace will not be wiped away. That's not to say that Jesus doesn't offer real grace and real forgiveness for sexual sin, but it is to highlight that even in the midst of our repentance, there are consequences that we may have to walk with for the rest of our lives.

And so that's why Solomon cares so much about warning his son here. As we think about this passage for us, there are still houses that we need to stay away from.

It may not be a physical house. You may not have someone in your neighborhood who's standing on the corner trying to tempt you, but there are places where sexual experiences are offered.

[20 : 26] There are relationships and people who offer these things. Some of you have had that experience. You know when someone's giving you the eyes, right? And those eyes say this, I wonder what it would be like if you were my husband instead of my current husband.

I wonder what it would be like if you were my wife rather than my current wife. You can see that sometimes, right? In the way that someone interacts with you, in the way that they look at you. Stay away from that person.

It could be flattering, right? That someone's thinking of you in that way. Don't be like the simple person. Don't be flattered by that. Be scared by that. Move away. Have boundaries, right?

You may be someone who needs to be relocated in your job. You may need someone who needs to change some of the things about your life so your contact with that person is less. Of course, it's not just people and relationships.

I will highlight this. So there's relationships, right? We have to know our temptations. There was a lot of talk a couple years ago about the Billy Graham rule where Billy Graham would resolve never to be alone with someone of the opposite sex and then Vice President Mike Pence took that rule upon himself and our culture did what?

[21 : 39] They mocked him for it. They mocked him for seeking sexual integrity. Now, I'm not telling you that you need to adopt the Billy Graham rule or the Mike Pence rule. They were not just staying away from the foreign woman, they were staying away from every woman.

So I'm not binding your conscience with that. I'm just saying that's one application that those men took. Now, they're in a different position than many of us are. They're public figures. So they're at especially great risk for being sabotaged in some way for scandal.

But this is someone who in their particular situation is finding a way to apply that in their relationship. So whether we agree with that rule, whether we apply it to ourselves or not, we can look at that and say there's someone who's trying to stay far away from her house.

There's someone who is making sexual integrity a priority. There's someone who, unlike the simple person, is actively staying away from sexual temptation. Of course, it's not just relationships, right?

We live in a culture where there are movies and TV shows that present us with things that are not helpful for our hearts and our minds. Now, I'm not here to tell you which shows you should and should not watch.

[22 : 50] And each of us has to know our own temptations, right? For some of us, there's things that we watch that are going to take us in places in our minds we should not be. There's others of us, those things won't take us to that place.

So for different people, that line's going to be in a different place. But what we don't do is we don't take the assumption of our culture and say, well, you know, it's a drama, it's a documentary, it's not pornography so I can watch whatever I want, right?

We know that that's another house sometimes we need to stay away from. And so we don't just consume the content that our culture gives us without thinking about it, without discernment.

We are careful where we park our sexuality. I read to you an excerpt last time from this book, *Why Does God Care Who I Sleep With?*

And he compares our sexuality to a car, that they're beater cars, right? We don't care what we do with them. And then he tells the story of someone loaned him a convertible that didn't have a single scratch on it.

[23 : 53] You better believe he was careful with that car because the car was valuable. He makes the same point about our sexuality. We are careful about where we park it because God values it so much.

It has so much worth. And so we value it as well. And so when it comes to the people we're with and the things we watch, we are careful where we park ourselves.

We're careful where we place ourselves. Now it's not just people. It's not just entertainment. Of course, one of the greatest corners, one of the greatest houses that we need to be careful about in our culture is what's happening on the internet.

What we're doing when we're on our phones or our computers. Maybe staying far away for you means that you need a filter on your phone and your computer.

Maybe it means you need an accountability software. I know many people and I do this myself who use a software called Covenant Eyes which they put on their phones and their computers and it monitors every single website that they go to.

[24 : 55] And then it filters through them and it emails a variety of people that you've chosen as accountability partners any website that you've visited that's questionable. And so it's a way to stay away from that house, right?

You know that you are not anonymous. You're not able to believe the lie that this woman offers to this man, right? This is going to be secret.

Chapter 7 verses 19 and 20. And so for many of us maybe for most of us we don't want to accidentally stumble into the wrong part of town. That means being proactive about what's happening to us when we're on the internet.

There are all sorts of things on the internet that are wonderful and all sorts of things that are terrible and damaging. So we want to present prevent ourselves from accidentally stumbling into those areas.

Remember the fool here. We don't know if this was intentional, right? He's just on a walk. He may not have been seeking this woman out. The problem is that he wasn't proactive in staying away from her.

[25 : 59] Regardless of his intention he was not on guard. He did not realize the fact that he was in a war. That when we're against sexual sin we have to have strategies.

We have to go in with a plan. That's what the wise person does. We are in a war against sexual sin. That's what the fool is unwilling to admit. That's why he finds himself at the wrong place at the wrong time.

I want you to think about when we think about the internet think about it like this. About over a decade ago I was in New Orleans. And if you've ever visited New Orleans you know that it's it's a mixed bag, right?

There are wonderful things there. There's wonderful music and musicians. There is wonderful food. There are wonderful cultural events. And also you could turn the corner and suddenly without warning find yourself in the red light district.

No warning, right? You could be walking around walking into a jazz club or a jazz bar and you look and you realize oh that's a prostitute. That's the same way the internet works.

[27 : 12] There are many wonderful things about it. And if we are not on guard we're wandering around right without even trying to we stumble into things and think oh wait I'm in the red district now.

oh that's something I shouldn't be looking at even without in our culture seeking it out. And so we make sure we stay away from her house.

We make sure we stay far away from the places of temptation. We have a strategy. We have a game plan. We know where the enemy is, right? We are in a war against sexual sin and so we don't just wander around.

We want to make sure we have the high ground. If you're in a battle you're not just going to wander down into a valley without thinking about it. You want to know who's on either side and what they're going to do. The same is true of our battle against sexual sin.

We know where we are and we're on guard against it. That's what the wise person does. He knows the territory. He knows where the dangers are.

[28 : 19] He stays far away from it. The other thing that's interesting about this foolish young man not just is he in the wrong place at the wrong time why is he wandering around late at night?

Now there could be a variety of reasons he's wandering around late at night. I'll suggest one to you. Since he's a simple person he's probably not an ant. It's one thing to stay away from sexual sin but why is he wandering around?

This man probably has too much time on his hands. He's not pursuing the things he needs to pursue. He's not working hard for the things he needs to work hard for. So of course he's open up to these temptations.

Of course there are these opportunities for him. My last semester in seminary I took this class with a professor on preparing for pastoral ministry and he never gave our final papers back.

I shouldn't say he never. He did not return them. And then we all graduated and went to various places. And he finally decided I don't remember how long it was after it wasn't quite a year but the next winter he finally sent our papers to us.

[29 : 36] And because he was sending them through the mail he wrote us all this letter. And I still have it. He wrote us this long letter and a lot of it was a discussion about sexual sin.

Writing it to a majority of men, young men coming out of seminary. And he says this. It is not possible simply to deal with sin in your own heart and life and by this alone to become a changed person.

More than anything else sinful patterns have to be replaced with patterns of obedience, habits of love and acts of serving and caring for others. This is true with all sins including the sins of the many of you who struggle with your sexuality.

You have too much time alone, too much time thinking about yourself, too much time on the computer exploring the internet, too much time thinking about your own sexuality and too much time finding ways to serve your own sexual fulfillment.

your lives need to become much more engaged in living for other people, most of all in living for your wives and children or husbands and children for those of you who are married, but also in a life of serving others.

[30 : 50] And if you are single, just get deeply involved in some truly demanding relationships in a ministry that uses your mind, heart, imagination, soul, and strength.

You simply will not have so much time or so much energy and your mind and heart will become full of your concern for other people rather than merely the needs of yourself.

You will develop genuine battle faith and an embattled life because you will become full of concern, compassion, and love for other people rather than being so focused on your own fulfillment and your own sin.

And then he goes on to say this, in addition to this general human problem and your weaknesses in this area, you are children of this generation, a generation in which all through your lives you have been encouraged to love yourself, to serve yourself, to make time for yourself, to find fulfillment for yourself.

Instead of this absurd call from our culture to be self-centered, we have been created and redeemed for the Lord and to give ourselves every day to a life of love for others.

[32 : 06] These are the fundamental and most constant graces of repentance for which we need to pray and at which we need to work. Of course, you can see this is a long letter.

It costs a dollar for him to mail it. The point is this, this man, it's not just that he's at the wrong place at the wrong time. He is not pursuing the good.

He is not working hard like the ant. He is not loving his neighbor as himself. So it's not just his location but his activity. If he were an ant, he wouldn't have time to be wandering the streets by himself, himself.

Because he's a simple person though, he has all this time on his hands. And so it's not just that we stay far away, that we pursue the love of others.

We pursue true and real community. And of course, these aren't the only solutions to sexual sin. As I've told you, I'm going to say something, but not everything, but that's the one that's presented here.

[33 : 10] We stay far away from places where we might be tempted because we love God and we love his ways. And we look to do things that are serving others.

And so we don't even have time, right? We're not even able to get caught up in these sorts of things. Of course, as I've been telling you, Jesus is our great and greater wisdom teacher.

Matthew chapter 12, verse 42, tells us that Jesus is greater than Solomon. And Jesus teaches these very same things. Jesus also tells us to stay far away from sin.

Remember, in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 5, he says, this, if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

[34 : 15] So Jesus is just repeating as the greater wisdom teacher the same thing. Look, stay far away from sin. Whatever might be drawing you towards that, even if it's your eye, run away from it.

Put it to death early so you don't have to suffer great consequences later. Of course, that's a motivation of fear and it's good and right to talk about the consequences of sin.

But as I've been telling you, we need more than fear, right? We need a new love. We need something good and great to replace things that are little and small. And so Jesus also offers us something better.

I told you from Proverbs chapter 5 that he makes us a promise again in Matthew 5, blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. We could say that God pulls us into a greater drama.

He pulls us into something more beautiful. I shared with you last time from this book about the fact that there is something greater than sex, right? That sex points to. It's our relationship with God and the community that he's building.

[35 : 17] And this man points out from Mark chapter 2 the fact that Jesus refers to himself as the bridegroom. In other words, he is the true husband. He's inviting us into something ultimately that's even greater and better than sex and family and marriage.

These things are just small pictures of the great future that Jesus has for us that we experience in part now and will experience in full in the future. And so it's not just that we stay far away from sexual sin but we pursue the real, true intimacy and love and community that Jesus offers us now through himself and through his community.

He gives us something better and greater that is actually worth our love. He gives us a better place to walk than the corner that her house is on.

Jesus offers us something better to pursue and work for and chase after. Jesus, the bridegroom, is here. Recently, over during the coronavirus when we were all under quarantine, I received a friend request on Facebook from someone I have not had contact with in over a decade.

And this person was not even really a friend of mine. They were just an acquaintance. So I was very surprised that they were friending me and I looked on his profile and I was shocked to see that this person was engaged in Christian ministry.

[36 : 50] The reason I was shocked is because the time when I knew this individual, he was very much not a Christian. He was living a lifestyle that we would not follow as people who love Jesus.

So I immediately messaged him. I said, what in the world? Why are you working for such and such organization? He messaged me back, yeah, lots changed since I knew you. And so, of course, I was very curious. I ended up having a phone call with him because I wanted to hear about his journey to faith in Jesus Christ.

And as we began talking, I kind of asked him, you know, what was it really that convinced you? And he shared with me that one of the most challenging things for him in becoming a Christian was embracing the Christian sexual ethic.

And I said, well, what was it that changed your mind? You're like, what book was it that you read or what argument was it that really, he said, it wasn't a book or an argument. He said, I became a part of a Christian community.

And as I was part of that community and I saw the gospel lived out, I realized that it was true and it was plausible. And even more than that, and he said, this might be too much information, but as I was part of that community, as I was involved in other people in their lives, living with them and loving them, I found myself naturally looking at pornography less and less.

[38 : 05] I didn't want it anymore. I had something better, right? He had real and true relationships and community. He was pulled into real love. He was pulled into a place where he was actually serving other people, sacrificing for them.

And so brothers and sisters, Jesus calls us away from sexual sin. He calls us to stay far away, to not even get close.

But he doesn't just call us away. He calls us into something. He calls us into his greater story. He calls us into a greater community.

He calls us into real love and intimacy and fellowship and commitment. And so we can embrace that, we can embrace him, and we can embrace wisdom instead of any other counterpart.

And we do that because Jesus comes and does that for us first. And so we can do it with joy, loving and embracing the people that God has given us, loving our neighbor as ourselves.

[39 : 12] I invite you to pray with me. Our Father in heaven, we thank you and praise you again for your word that is your gift to us.

We ask that you would build us up into a community and people who stay far away from sexual sin. and we embrace you and the better story that you've given us.

We thank you that this isn't something we do by pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps, but it's something that Jesus gives to us through his word and in his community. And we ask that you would make that true of us and of this church.

And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.